

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 - 22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method for accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the method comprising:

using a processor, performing steps comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein a subset of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from said subset that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation and including a plurality of queries;

displaying said plurality of queries to said user, wherein each of said plurality of queries has a categorical scale of likelihood regarding whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the categorical scale of likelihood being represented by a plurality of potential responses, said categorical scale of likelihood being associated with said plurality of potential responses before said plurality of queries is displayed to said user, and wherein the plurality of queries is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responding to the children queries of the parent query;

presenting to the user at least one discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to at least one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user one or more user responses to said plurality of queries, where each of said one or more user responses is selected from the plurality of potential responses such that each of the user responses indicates a

likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said plurality of queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more user responses;

~~associating said supporting evidence received from said user with at least one of said plurality of queries for which a user response has been received;~~

evaluating said one or more user responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result indicated by each of said one or more user responses, such that said one or more user responses collectively support a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

forming an argument supporting the conclusion of the evaluating, the argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more user responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publishing said argument, including said relevant template, said one or more user responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review.

24. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 23, wherein input to one or more of the plurality of queries is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

25. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 24, the method further comprising allowing one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.

26. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

27. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 23, wherein each of the

plurality of queries is a multiple choice question.

28. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 27, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the given situation have a positive or negative result.

29. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 28, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of responses that partition the categorical scale of likelihood.

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 30 23, the method further comprising receiving more than one response for at least one of the plurality of queries.

32. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 30 23, wherein the parent query is automatically responded to using a response technique selected by [[a]] the user.

33. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 32, wherein the response technique is selected from a group comprising: a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique comprises answering the parent query with a response that averages responses associated with the plurality of children queries.

34. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 30 23, wherein each response within the a first level of the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each of the plurality of colors representing a different response so that colors of the first hierarchical structure level convey a line of reasoning.

35. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 30 23, wherein one or more

of the plurality of queries is associated with a second level of the hierarchical structure of-queries and the first hierarchical structure level and the second hierarchical structure level together form a set of cascaded arguments.

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 23, wherein each of the plurality of searchable templates is associated with a situation descriptor, the method further comprising selecting one of the plurality of searchable templates which is most relevant to the given situation by comparing the given situation to situation descriptors associated with the plurality of searchable templates to thereby find most relevant ones of the plurality of searchable templates having situation descriptors that most closely match the given situation.

38. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 23, the method further comprising creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

39. - 40. (Cancelled)

41. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium containing executable program instructions for accessing or generating an argument supporting a conclusion for a given situation, the instructions causing a processor to perform steps comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein a subset of the plurality of searchable templates is relevant to the given situation;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said plurality of searchable templates from said subset that is relevant to the given situation, said one of said plurality of searchable templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation and including a plurality of queries;

displaying said plurality of queries to said user, wherein each of said plurality of

queries has a categorical scale of likelihood regarding whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the categorical scale of likelihood being represented by a plurality of potential responses, said categorical scale of likelihood being associated with said plurality of potential responses before said plurality of queries is displayed to said user, and wherein the plurality of queries is formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent query that has a plurality of children queries is automatically responded to by responded responding to the children queries of the parent query;

presenting to the user at least one discovery tool that links to an external data source to facilitate responding to at least one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user one or more user responses to said plurality of queries, where each of said one or more user responses is selected from the plurality of potential responses such that each of the user responses indicates a likelihood of a negative or positive result for an associated one of the plurality of queries;

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said plurality of queries, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the one or more user responses;

associating said supporting evidence received from said user with at least one of said plurality of queries for which a user response has been received;

evaluating said one or more user responses, in accordance with the likelihood of a negative or positive result indicated by each of said one or more user responses, such that said one or more user responses collectively support a conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result;

forming an argument supporting the conclusion of the evaluating, the argument comprising the relevant template, the one or more user responses, the supporting evidence, and the conclusion; and

publishing said argument, including said relevant template, said one or more user responses, said supporting evidence, and said conclusion, for review.

42. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in

claim 41, further comprising:

associating a rationale with each of the user responses.

43. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 41, wherein input to one or more of the plurality of queries is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

44. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium system as recited in claim 43, further comprising:

allowing one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the argument.

45. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium system as recited in claim 44, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

46. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 41, wherein each of the plurality of queries is a multiple choice question.

47. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 46, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the given situation have a positive or negative result.

48. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 47, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of responses that partition the categorical scale of likelihood.

49. (Cancelled)

50. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim

49 41, further comprising:

allowing more than one response for each of the plurality of queries.

51. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49 41, wherein the parent query is automatically answered using a response technique selected by [[a]] the user.

52. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 51, wherein the response technique is selected from a group comprising: a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique comprises answering the parent query with a response that averages responses associated with the plurality of children queries.

53. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49 41, wherein each response within the a first level of the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each of the plurality of colors representing a different response so that colors of the first hierarchical structure level convey a line of reasoning.

54. (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 49 41, wherein one or more of the plurality of queries is associated with a second level of the hierarchical structure of queries and the first hierarchical structure level and the second hierarchical structure level together form a set of cascaded arguments.

55. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 41, wherein each of the plurality of templates is associated with a situation descriptor and the argument server selects one of the plurality of templates which is most relevant to the given situation by comparing the given situation to situation descriptors associated with the plurality of templates to thereby find a most relevant one of the plurality of templates having a situation descriptor that most closely matches the

given situation.

56. (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium as recited in claim 41, further comprising:

allowing a creation of a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

57. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 23, further comprising associating a rationale provided by said user to each of said plurality of queries for which a response has been received.

58. (New) The method as recited in claim 32, wherein the response technique comprises answering the parent query with a response associated with one of the plurality of children queries that indicates a most positive outcome.

59. (New) The method as recited in claim 32, wherein the response technique comprises answering the parent query with a response associated with one of the plurality of children queries that indicates a most negative outcome.